

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 064279

EO. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION

1. LUXEMBOURG AMBASSADOR CALLED ON NEA DEPUTY ASSISTANT
SECRETARY DAY MARCH 16 TO BE BROUGHT UP TO DATE ON LEBANESE
SITUATION. HE SAID EC NINE SENIOR POLITICAL COMMITTEE
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WOULD BE MEETING BEGINNING MARCH 17 AND COULD WELL DISCUSS

LEBANON IN VIEW OF CURRENT DETERIORATION THERE. SINCE LUXEMBOURG WAS EC NINE PRESIDENT AT THE MOMENT HE WOULD HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO GET DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT.

2. DAY SAID THAT CEASEFIRE AND POLITICAL COMPROMISE THAT HAD BEEN WORKED OUT UNDER SYRIAN AUSPICES SOME WEEKS AGO HAD BROKEN DOWN IN LARGE PART BECAUSE MORE EXTREME WINGS OF LEBANESE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, PARTICULARLY THE MOSLEM LEFT, HAD BEEN UNWILLING TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO NEW POLITICAL BALANCE. LARGELY AS A RESULT OF FAILURE OF POLITICAL ELEMENTS TO RESOLVE SITUATION, LEBANESE ARMY BEGAN TO DISINTEGRATE, WITH SIZEABLE NUMBER OF MOSLEMS BREAKING AWAY INTO DISSIDENT GROUPS. DURING PAST WEEK BEIRUT GARRISON COMMANDER OF THE ARMY, WITH SOME SENIOR SUPPORT, DEMANDED RESIGNATION OF LEBANESE PRESIDENT.

3. SINCE THEN FOCUS HAD BEEN ON QUESTION OF THE PRESIDENCY. THERE WERE REPORTS THAT PRESIDENT FRANGIE WOULD BE PREPARED TO RESIGN IF FACE-SAVING WAY OUT COULD BE FOUND AND IF HIS SUCCESSOR WOULD BE NAMED IN ADVANCE. THERE WERE INTENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS UNDER WAY ON THE QUESTION.

4. SYRIANS, WHO HAD SUCCEEDED IN REESTABLISHING ORDER, NOW FOUND SITUATION RELATIVELY UNCONTROLLABLE. THEY HAD PUT SOMEWHAT MORE THAN 5,000 PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ARMY PERSONNEL INTO LEBANON, SUBJECT TO THEIR CONTROL, BUT UNITS WERE DISPERSED THROUGHOUT COUNTRY AND WITH BREAKDOWN OF LEBANESE ARMY INTERNAL ORDER BEGAN AGAIN TO DETERIORATE. WE HAVE JUST HEARD THAT SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER WAS EXPECTED IN BEIRUT MARCH 16 OR 17, PRESUMABLY TO MAKE RENEWED EFFORT TO NEGOTIATE SOLUTION.

5. ON QUESTION OF POSSIBLE ISRAELI OR SYRIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION, WHICH LUXEMBOURG AMBASSADOR PROFESSED HIMSELF PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT, DAY SAID THAT TO BEST OF DEPARTMENT'S KNOWLEDGE THERE HAD NOT YET BEEN OVERT AND SIGNIFICANT INTERVENTION BY SYRIAN MILITARY FORCES OPERATING AS SUCH. SYRIAN PRESIDENT HAD STAKED CONFIDENTIAL

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A GOOD DEAL OF PERSONAL PRESTIGE ON SUCCESS OF HIS LEBANESE EFFORT AND HE MIGHT WELL BE TEMPTED TO BACK UP THIS EFFORT WITH MORE FORCE IF SITUATION SEEMED UNCONTROLLABLE OTHERWISE. HE ALSO CLEARLY AWARE, HOWEVER, OF DANGER OF ISRAELI INTERVENTION IF HE SHOULD DO SO. WE WERE UNABLE TO PREDICT WHAT HE WOULD DO BUT WERE CONVINCED THAT HE WOULD BE MOST RELUCTANT TO TAKE THIS COURSE. WE THOUGHT IT VERY UNLIKELY THAT ISRAELIS

WOULD INTERVENE IN FORCE EXCEPT IN RESPONSE TO SYRIAN INTERVENTION. AMBASSADOR ASKED IF U.S. WAS CAUTIONING THE TWO GOVERNMENTS AGAINST INTERVENTION AND DAY REPLIED THAT WE WERE. IN RESPONSE TO FURTHER QUESTION, DAY SAID, HOWEVER, THAT WE COULD BY NO MEANS BE SURE OUR CAUTIONING WOULD PREVAIL WITH ISRAELIS IF SYRIANS SHOULD MOVE; THERE WOULD BE GRAVE RISK OF ISRAELI ACTION IN SUCH A CASE.

6. AMBASSADOR INQUIRED ABOUT SOVIET ROLE AND WHETHER U.S. HAD APPROACHED MOSCOW. DAY SAID WE HAD NOT TALKED TO SOVIETS AND THAT WE HAD NO INDICATION SOVIETS WERE PLAYING PARTICULARLY ACTIVE ROLE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. AMBASSADOR SAID HIS GOVERNMENT'S INFORMATION ON LATTER POINT WAS THE SAME.

7. AMBASSADOR INQUIRED WHETHER, IN OUR VIEW, THERE WAS ANYTHING EC NINE COULD DO TO BE HELPFUL. DAY SAID THAT

WAS FOR THE NINE TO DECIDE, BUT IT COULD ONLY BE HELPFUL TO URGE RESTRAINT AND PATIENCE BY ALL THE PARTIES INVOLVED.

8. EMBASSY LUXEMBOURG SHOULD REITERATE POINTS CONVEYED TO LUXEMBOURG AMBASSADOR DURING CONSULTATIONS WITH PRESIDENCY PRIOR TO POLITICAL DIRECTORS' MEETING. KISSINGER

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